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MODERN LANGUAGE NOTES.

Baltimore, June, 1900.

"THAN WHOM."

Than whom is usually dismissed with the remark that the construction is syntactically irregular, but is finally accepted usage; and, in testimony, some accessible manual is cited to show that, in certain abridged clauses, the objective is incorrectly employed, though by a tendency so strong as to validate the locution. This, however true, is a very inadequate adjournment of an old, but unsettled, question which deserves minuter consideration.

No one, I believe, except the arbitrary Cobbett and the superior Moon, proposes to put into actual use *than who* instead of *than whom*; though no one explains why he hesitates at the innovation, in the face of the obtrusive analogy for the nominative case. Strange to say, Dean Alford, a volunteer grammarian whose instinct is sometimes better than his reasoning, does observe that this construction cannot be elliptical; but he does not apparently recognize the significance of the observation. Bishop Lowth, too, has a pertinent suggestion; but it is only a suggestion. *Than* by history is undoubtedly a conjunction; and, as such, it can have no effect on the form of any other word. At any rate, no other conjunction—unless, as is sometimes maintained, it be *as*—affects the case of the related pronoun: hence, the dilemma is either to regard *than* as an exception to the usual limited influence of conjunctions or to countenance its migration to that other part of speech, cognate to it as being a connective, but alien to it as showing direct relation between individual words and thus affecting the form of one of them. To put it otherwise, if *than* is not a unique conjunction, must it not be a preposition? That it does become a preposition in this locution is beyond question: how it succeeds to this function remains to be investigated.

Conjunctions, even when they seem to join words and phrases, in reality show only the relations, not between such words and phrases themselves, but between each of them and a third term which is common to them. For ex-

ample, in "John and Mary dance," *and* shows, not what John and Mary have to do with each other—a relation which is not pertinent—but what each of them has to do with *dance*. There are some apparent exceptions to this analysis, but they are only apparent. On the other hand, prepositions join only words, and show what they have to do with each other. For example, in "tons of coal," "killed by poison," *of* and *by* show the relation of the joined words to each other, without reference to any third term, except in so far as all the elements of any group are more or less related to all the other elements. In accordance with this principle, the form of the relative in our phrase must be *whom*, not from any reasons of euphony or usage, still less for any accidental case-confusions of earlier English now licensed; but because the objective case is here inevitable by those established laws of grammar which are elsewhere accepted. It is, of course, admitted that *than* need not, except when immediately followed by the relative, be regarded as a preposition; though there is no reason why it should not be so regarded, when once it has developed the function of case-government; but, with the relative, no other explanation is possible. The real point on which the matter turns has never, if suspected, been disclosed. The explanation of analogy is incompetent, because not cogent: other pronominal forms after *than* vary, historically, between nominative and objective, while *who* takes always and necessarily the latter form. A necessary form cannot be explained by the analogy of a variable form; and, if it could, the warrant for the objective in these abridged formulæ would still remain to be determined; and there is no possible answer except that the concurrence of *than* and the objective implies prepositional constraint on the form of the pronoun.

Than in *than whom* is a preposition, because it establishes a relation between *whom* and some other word—"none" in the traditional example from Milton; and there is no way of completing a predication here with the relative for a possible subject, as is the case with *but* and *as*. Thus, I can say "All but *he* had fled,"

or "All but *him* had fled;" and I have thus established the same general relation by two different specific methods of expression. In the second phrase, *but* is a preposition relating *all* and *him* to each other; in the first, *but* is a conjunction relating *all* and *he* severally to *had fled*, the last term being for *he* modified into negation: accordingly, the second form can be expressed in extension by "All had fled, but he had not fled." Similarly in "He is wiser than I," the extended form is possible, and we can write "He is wiser than I am (wise)." But in *than whom*, no extension is possible with *who* as a converted subject; and consequently there is no way of establishing the necessary relation by predication, the theoretical common term being impossible as a separate predicate after the relative pronoun. Accordingly, it is impossible to develop Milton's expression into "Beelzebub, than *who* sat, none higher sat;" and no such locution is found in any language. The irresistible conclusion is that, if, of two general methods of relation, one is unavailable, the other must be recognized and used even at the expense of readjusting the functions of the necessary connective, though that connective is ordinarily appropriated by the other method. This is what is done in Greek with *πρὶν* with the infinitive, however timid grammarians are in realizing the fact that their conjunction has here become an obvious preposition. Words of this diathesis are as a rule provisionally disposed of as adverbs, that part of speech being the catch-all of lost, strayed, and stolen grammaticisms. *Præter* with the nominative seems to be so regarded by commentators and annotators; but no one has ever yet detected among the functions of the adverb the power to relate predications; and *præter* followed by a nominative must relate predications, the nominative being the pendent subject of the second predication. As already hinted, there is no lack of instances to illustrate *as* followed by an objective; but such instances are naturally condemned as negligences and ignorances, even though Cardinal Newman and Matthew Arnold confessed to prejudices in favor of the construction.

Than in *than whom* is a preposition, whether illegitimately or not; because *whom*, being a

relative, involves a conjunction; and the relative admits no introductory conjunction except when two or more relative clauses are coördinately subordinated to the same antecedent, as is not the case in *than whom*, which is a single subordinate construction. *And* and *but* may coördinate two relational modifications to a common antecedent; in these cases, however, *and* and *but* really connect the repetitions of the main statement accompanied in each case by the respective relative clause. On the other hand, the *and which* construction, though it is coördinate in form, as it attempts co-ordination with a mere adjective preceding, is still under the ban. Gould Brown's suspicions were aroused by the conjunctive character of the relative as repudiating the conjunctive supplement of *than*; but he does not appear to have understood the necessary consequences of his misgiving. *Than* cannot in *than whom* be a conjunction, because it is impossible to supply an antecedent for *who(m)* between *than* and *who(m)*, and no conjunction ever separates a relative from its antecedent: *than* certainly, in the traditional example, separates the relative *whom* from its intended antecedent *Beelzebub*, and hence it cannot be a conjunction. Moreover, the introduction of a new formal antecedent between *than* and *whom*, if it were possible, would create an impossible exigency by establishing the basis for a new predication that could not be completed, while it would fatally dislocate one already complete and consistent. The reason a conjunction never separates a relative from its antecedent is the same reason that prohibits a conjunction between a noun and its adjective-modifier.

Furthermore, after the conjunction *than*, the clause must be such that, if *than* be omitted, the clause could stand alone as an independent sentence—a condition realized by *than* everywhere else, but impossible with *than who*. It is impossible here to complete any predication after *who*; but, even if it were not impossible, no relation could be established between such predication and the formal context.

I hope I have satisfactorily shown that *than who* is impossible grammatically and logically and that *than whom* grammatically and logically shifts *than* to the category of prepositions, just as *save* has been shifted from the verb *vid*

the preposition into the conjunction. Of course, it still remains possible, for those who cannot make up their minds, to impound innocuous desuetude for the bookish phrase for which Milton's Latinism is usually held accountable, though Shakespeare far outdid him in "than whom no mortal so magnificent." How much farther back the phrase goes, no one seems to know; but Swift, Prior, Bolingbroke and others are by Lowth cited in its illustration. Those who choose can justify *than me*, *than us*, etc., by the special analogy, though it can always be urged against them that these phrases lack the main defence of the relative combination. Some persons may wish to extend to *as* the same latitude of relation and the same adaptation of regimen; but, though *as* has some relative affinities, they are not of the kind to be cogent here. So far as *than whom* is concerned, I think the case must be closed by validating *than* as a preposition—a function plainly exemplified by the Latin and Greek equivalents, which being case-forms, are always prepositional and never conjunctive.

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ETYMOLOGICAL NOTES.

1. GERM. *bautan* in ON. *bauta* 'slay,' *beytell* 'hammer,' OE. *bātan* 'beat, clash together, tramp, tread on,' *ge-bāat* 'beating,' *bietel* 'mallet,' OHG. *bōzan* 'beat,' may be compared with Lith. *bandziū* 'punish, chastise,' *bandimas* 'punishment.' This, of course, does not exclude the explanation given by Persson, *Wz.* 290.

2. OS. *griotan*, OE. *grēotan* 'weep' need not be connected with the synonymous Goth. *grētan*, ON. *grūta*, etc. They are rather akin to Lith. *grandziū* 'wehmütig thun,' *graudūs* 'brittle; heartbreaking, touching.' The primary meaning here is 'breaking, crushing.' Further related are, therefore, Lith. *grūdū* 'stamp,' *grūdas*, Lett. *grauds* 'grain,' OCh. Sl. *gruda* 'clod,' MHG. *griez*, *grüz*, OHG. *grioz*, OE. *grēot* 'sand, grit,' ON. *grjōt* 'stone,' OE. *grūt* 'coarse meal,' *grot* 'particle, groats,' etc. (cf. Kluge, *Et. Wb.* s. v. *Griess*, *Grütze*; Prellwitz, *Et. Wb.* s. v. *χρυσός*).

The base *ghreu-d-* in the above is a derivative of *ghreu-* in Lith. *griūvū* 'fall to pieces, collapse,' *griūju* 'break down, crash, thunder,' Gk. *χράω*, *χράνω* 'graze, scratch,' etc. (cf. Prellwitz, *Et. Wb.*).

3. In *JGPh.* I, 295 f. I connected Goth. *bliggwan* 'beat,' OHG. *blinwan* 'bläuen, schlagen,' OE. *blēowan* 'strike, apply blows' with Goth. *ga-malwan* 'crush, bruise,' ON. *mōlva* 'shatter,' to which also belongs Gk. *μύλλω* 'crush' < **mlūjō* (Johansson, *PBB.*, 15, 232), from the root *mel-*, *mol-* 'crush, rub, grind.' The base in the above is *molho-*, *mleho-*. Compare OHG. *melo*, OE. *melu* 'meal,' ME. *melwe* 'mellow, soft,' pre-Germ. **melho-* 'crushed, soft,' Skt. *matvā-s* 'unbesonnen, töricht,' Lith. *maiviniu* 'zahm machen,' Gk. *μῶλυσ* 'feeble, sluggish,' *μῶλυστις* 'breaking, crushing, softening,' *μῶλινω* 'enfeeble, dull, blunt,' *μολύνω* 'stain, sully,' primarily 'rub, smear,' *μέλεος* 'useless, vain,' from **meleho-s*, *αμβλύνω* 'blunt, dull,' *αμβλός* 'blunt, dulled; dull, obtuse; dim, faint, weak; spiritless, slack, sluggish' (cf. Prellwitz, *Et. Wb.* s. v. *μέλεος*). With these compare the following:

OE. *blāp*, pre-Germ. **mlou-tu-*, 'timid, sluggish,' OHG. *blōdi*, MHG. *blæde* 'zerbrechlich; gebrechlich, schwach; zaghaft,' OS. *blōð* 'timid,' ON. *blauðr* 'weak, sluggish, timid,' *bleyða* 'coward,' OSw. *blōðher* 'timid,' Goth. *blaupjan* 'make void, abolish.' Compare the base *mlā-* in Skt. *mlāyati* 'welkt, erschläfft, wird schwach,' Gk. *βλάξ* 'slack, inactive, sluggish, spiritless, stupid; effeminate, delicate, fastidious, braggart.'

With these we may compare the Germ. base *blauta-*, *blotta-* (probably from **mloutnō-*, **mlutnō-*) in OE. *blēat* 'bringing misery,' MHG. *blōz* 'naked,' bare, unprotected,' OSw. *blotter*, Sw. *blott* 'bar, blossom,' OFries. *blāt* 'bare, poor.' Here the primary meaning is 'crush, rub, wear off, strip.' Compare Skt. *bā-bhas-ti* 'crush:' OHG. *bar* 'bare'; Gk. *ψῆν* 'rub, wipe,' *ψίω* 'crush:' *ψιλόσ* 'bare, naked, bald'; Lat. *terō* 'rub; rub off,' etc.

4. Distinct from this is another Germ. base *blauta-*, *blota-* 'wet, soaked, bloated,' etc. This is rather from the root *bhleho-*, *bhlū-* 'swell, overflow.' Compare Gk. *φλέω* 'gush, over-